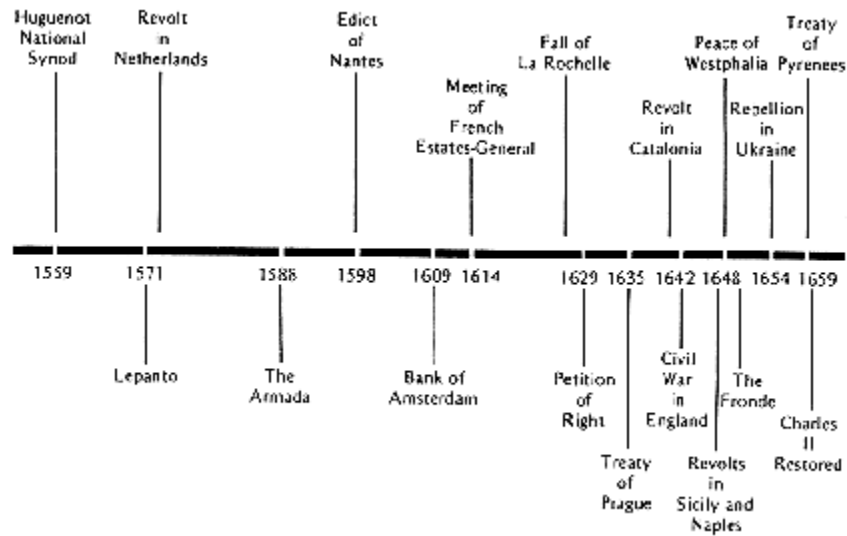


## **REVIEW GUIDE FOR THE AGE OF RELIGIOUS WARS**

### **TIME LINE**



### **THE RELIGIOUS WARS**

The Peace of Augsburg failed to solve the religious question in the Hapsburg ruled territories. While Lutheranism was recognized as a legal religion that the ruling prince could choose for his subjects, Calvinism was not. The issue of Calvinism became especially troublesome in the Netherlands, the seventeen semi-independent provinces under Charles V's rule.

### **PROTESTANT REVOLT IN THE NETHERLANDS**

Charles V had rebuked religious reformers. His successor, Philip II, would prove harsher. When Charles V abdicated in 1556, his brother Ferdinand (1556-1564) received Austria and the Holy Roman Empire; his son Philip II (1556-1598), Spain and the Low Countries (present-day Netherlands and Belgium). The militant minority of Calvinists in the Netherlands was a powerful group of merchants, financiers, and working-class people who resented tax hikes and religious repression.

### **Defeat of the Spanish Armada**

Their response was bitter. Calvinists destroyed the art works and libraries of the Roman Catholic churches in their country. Mercenary troops led by the Duke of Alva (1508- 1582) were called in to put down the rebellion, initiating a ten-year civil war (1568-1578) between Catholics and Protestants, who were united under Prince William of Orange (1572-1584). The upshot was division in the Netherlands. The seven northern provinces, highly defensible because of their canals and dikes, secured their independence from Spain. But independence came slowly. English financial and military aid was required. Elizabeth I (1558-1603) of England, fearful of Spanish invasion of England after a successful defeat of the Protestant Netherlands, supplied aid. Philip launched his armada, or fleet of ships, to the English Channel, where the highly maneuverable smaller English ships and "The Protestant Wind," a series of squalls and storms, defeated the crescent formation of Spanish ships in 1588. In 1609, Philip II officially recognized the independence of the northern provinces led by Holland under the name of the United Provinces. The ten southern provinces, eventually to become Belgium, remained under the control of the Spanish Hapsburgs within the Catholic fold.

### **RELIGIOUS WARS IN FRANCE**

Religious upheavals affected France also. The Concordat of Bologna (1516) had established Catholicism as the state religion; yet abuses existed as church offices were used to pay civil servants. Many peasants and lower-middle-class French searching for salvation adopted

Calvinism. For the nobility, however, religion served more as an ideological cloak in a power struggle with the king and his allied nobles. The Catholic Guise and Protestant Bourbon families eyed the throne under a weakening Valois line, with Catherine de Medici (1547-1589) dominating the throne and switching her religious allegiance when to do so was in her interest. The brutal St. Bartholemew's Day massacre of Huguenots (French Calvinists) by Catholics in 1572 set off rioting and economic disorder. Assassinations of leading contenders to the throne, as well as the death of Catherine de Medici, enabled the Protestant Henry of Navarre to ascend the throne as Henry IV (1589-1610). "Paris is worth a mass," asserted Henry, who converted to Catholicism to become the first in a line of Bourbon rulers and sixteenth-century political leaders more concerned with internal stability than religious certitude. His publication of the Edict of Nantes (1598) granted Huguenots the rights of private worship throughout France and public worship in specified towns. They could also hold public office.

### **RELIGIOUS STABILITY IN ENGLAND**

The ideological struggles over religion and the civil wars they unleashed were avoided in England once Elizabeth I ascended the throne in 1558. Tranquillity was maintained until her death in 1603. She said: "I desire to open a window into no man's conscience." In short, she did not want religious divisions of opinion to surface and create disputes. Catholic and Puritan extremes threatened a tenuous stability. Elizabeth, therefore, insisted on external conformity to ensure political order but showed no concern for people's private thoughts. Everyone had to attend the Anglican church under punishment of fine. The church had both Catholic and Protestant elements and was thus comprehensive enough in doctrine and dogma to win the support of most of the loyal English.

### **RELIGIOUS WARS IN GERMANY**

While France, England, Spain, and the Dutch were achieving national unity, Germany was not. Religious issues resurfaced in 1618 with the closing of Protestant churches in Prague, in the kingdom of Bohemia (formerly Czechoslovakia). Enraged Protestants hurled Catholic officials from a castle window, so the story goes. This event known as the defenestration of Prague set off the Thirty Years' War. Denmark and later Sweden led by its able king Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632) entered the war, hoping to thwart Hapsburg ambition to unify all of the German states. France, although a Catholic country, also supported the Protestant camp to reduce the power of the Hapsburg ruler Ferdinand.

### **THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA**

The war dragged on on German soil until 1648, when the Peace of Westphalia was signed. Each prince, whether Lutheran, Catholic, or Calvinist, had independent sovereign power and could choose the established creed of his territory. Political and religious authority rested in the hands of approximately three hundred German princes. The Thirty Years' War effectively destroyed Germany's economy. Over one third of the population had been destroyed. The peasants were hardest hit. Many became day laborers for nobles and landlords who bought up their landholdings and thus created a new serfdom in the empire.

### **EXPLORATION AND EXPANSION**

While religious and political wars raged on the Continent, adventurous Europeans were discovering new trading routes to the Orient and India and new routes for the exploration and exploitation of a new world across the Atlantic Ocean. They included Prince Henry the Navigator, Francisco Pizarro, Hernando Cortez, Ferdinand Magellan, Christopher Columbus, Bartholomew Diaz, and Vasco de Balboa. Governments helped sponsor the voyages, most notably the Dutch East India Company, the organ of Dutch conquest and exploration. The mixed motives of seeking glory, finding gold, and proselytizing for God set the Portuguese, Spanish, English, French, and Dutch on their overseas voyages.

### **RESULTS**

The wars of religion brought mixed results. While King Philip II of Spain succeeded in reducing the power of the Moslem Turks in the Mediterranean, he failed in his efforts to restore Roman

Catholicism in England and lost control of the heavily Calvinist Dutch Netherlands. France remained a predominately Catholic country, although it continued to have a significant Huguenot minority. In the Holy Roman Empire the Hapsburgs failed to destroy Protestantism and in the process, suffered a further decrease of their own power. The power of the Spanish Hapsburgs declined, as well, and by the mid-seventeenth century, France had become the most powerful state on the European continent.